

The Wine Festival of Vevey.

BY KATHLEEN SCHLESINGER.

A description of a rare and glowing Swiss pageant, which is supposed to be celebrated every fifty years. The principal phases are illustrated by a series of remarkable photographs by Charles Rebmann, Vevey.



THE quiet little town of Vevey, on the beautiful shores of Lake Lemman, was awakened from its calm rusticity at the beginning of August, 1889, to make ready for the festival of the wine-dressers, which is celebrated every fifty years in the Canton of Vaud, and as often besides as there are events of rare historical importance to be commemorated. The inhabitants of Vevey, whose memory still dwells fondly on the magnificent pageant and fêtes which gladdened their hearts and eyes in 1889, propose, for instance, to repeat the festival in 1903 in commemoration of the centenary of the independence of their canton. And that the Vaudois *can* arrange and organize a grand pageant will be pretty evident from the beautiful photographs which illustrate this article.

It was in the roomy arena of the market-place of Vevey that the gorgeous festival of music, colour, and motion was during six successive days displayed before the wondering eyes of some 12,000 spectators who had assembled from near and far to witness this glorification of the rustic arts of agriculture, of labour, and of patriotism. This unique picture was set in an enchanting background of wooded hills and mountains, of the deep blue waters of Lake Lemman and of the still bluer Swiss sky, which had reserved for the great and festive occasion its choicest and sunniest smiles.

A good idea of the market-place in its festive dress and of the three triumphal arches will be gained from the various snap-shot photographs which serve to illustrate the article.

Those who could not obtain a seat in the stands or at one of the numerous windows overlooking the market-place had the consolation of witnessing the approach of the pageant as it defiled through the streets of the town.

At the appointed time, on August 5th, a military fanfare announced the approach of the pageant. Slowly the barriers of the great central arch were withdrawn, and the band of the Swiss Guards, in sixteenth century costume of red slashed with white, striped sleeves of red and white, and the white cross on the breast,

which is now recognised all the world over as a symbol of mercy and peace in the midst of war, marched through the gates to the inspiring strains of martial music.

They were commissioned to escort the Worshipful Guild of the Vine-dressers, who followed in a costume of green velvet and white of the period of Louis XV. At their side marched the Commandant of the Swiss Guards, with white plumed helmet and a coat of mail over his red and white uniform. The brave pikemen, descendants of those who opposed the arrogant encroachments of the Houses of Austria, Burgundy, and Savoy, brought up the rear.

Arrived in front of the platform, the 200 pikes, at a signal from the Commandant, struck the ground in salute; and while the Guild took up its position behind the white balustrade, 200 voices sang in chorus the "Hymne à la Patrie" so dear to every Swiss patriot. The silence with which the National Anthem was received was more eloquent than any outburst of applause.

Suddenly all eyes were turned towards the triumphal arches, which were simultaneously unbarred to admit symbolical pageants representing the three seasons which more especially influence the culture of the vine. The arch to the left of the photos. is inscribed with the name of Pales, the goddess of flocks and herds, who reigns over spring (the car of Pales is shown in photo. No. 1); the arch on the right bears the name of Ceres, goddess of harvest; while over the central arch appears, in letters of gold, "Ora et labora," the motto of the Worshipful Guild, surmounted by the temple of Bacchus, and a symbolic figure of Helvetia holding the escutcheon of the Canton of Vaud. This principal arch is sacred to the young god of wine, which forms the main industry of the country.

With a salute from those cannons so inseparably connected with every Swiss celebration, the Federal flag was hoisted, the bells of St. Martin's Church rang out a joyous peal, and the three brass bands of Pales, Ceres, and Bacchus



From a]

NO. 1.—THE GREAT CAR OF PALES, WITH THE THREE TRIUMPHAL ARCHES IN THE BACKGROUND.

[Photo.

struck up a grand march. Three majestic figures—the great high-priests of the three youthful deities, in long, white robes and togas of blue, red, and green—advanced slowly through their respective arches followed by their triumphal cars and suite to the centre of the arena, where, after the enthusiasm of the audience at this grand scene had subsided, the three high-priests sang the “Invocation,” of which the massed chorus of 1,200 followers took up the refrain.

The prizes to the most successful vine-dressers, Messieurs J. Balmat and F. Pasche, were next awarded by the Guild, and the Abbot pronounced an impressive speech of which the key-note was the motto “Ora et labora.” Thus concluded the first part of the proceedings, an appeal to the best and highest thoughts and feelings of man: the *leading motive*, in fact, of the whole great symphony.

A movement in the maze of colour to the left, and the pageant of Pales unrolled before the eyes of the delighted spectators. After the high-priest came the musicians, wearing short white tunics edged with blue, and the short cloak and hood which the Romans called *lacerna*. These heralded the youthful goddess, Pales, in her chariot drawn by two milk-white bulls, crowned with flowers and blue ribbons. It

really did not seem possible that scenes so beautiful and poetic could be enacted in these prosaic days. Under a silken canopy garlanded with leaves and flowers sat Pales herself, with young Spring at her feet; his mission on this occasion was to keep up the sacred flame in the tripod on the front of the car. The children of Spring, in blue or white, and holding baskets of flowers, surrounded the car. Then came young men bearing aloft on their shoulders trophies of flowers, the attributes of the pastoral deity.

After this procession had defiled round the arena the children danced a dainty ballet, as shown in photograph No. 2, where the evolutions of the little dancers are seen to the best advantage.

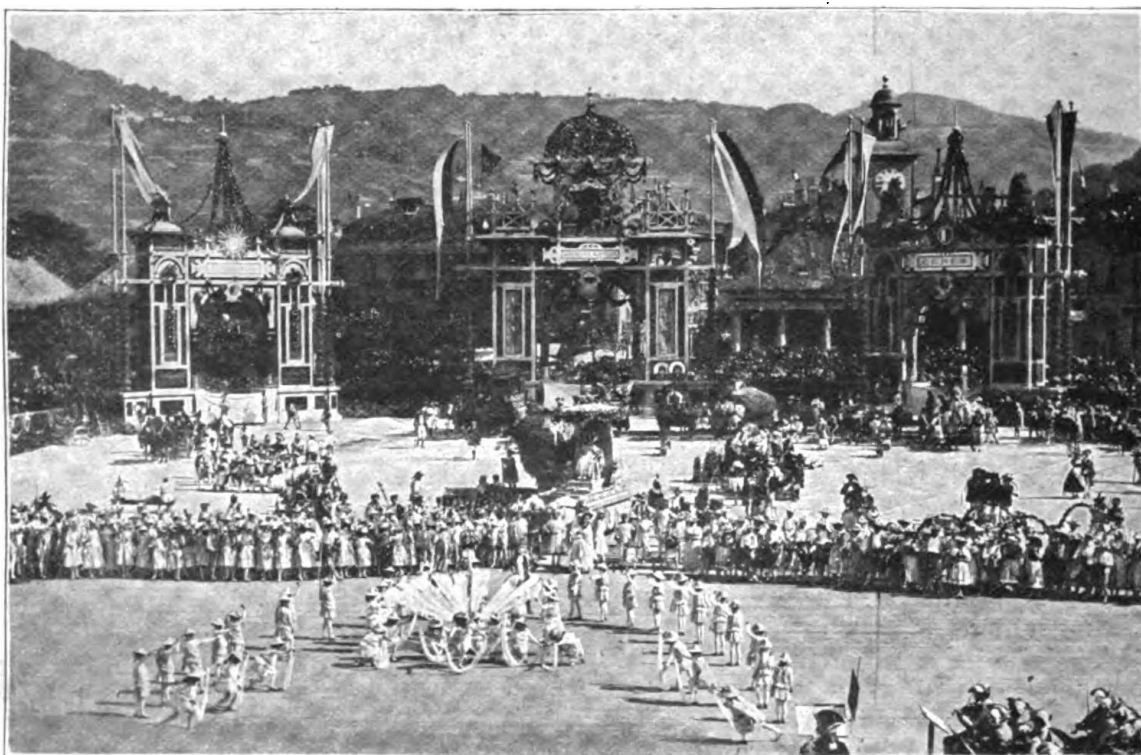
They had been provided with long, gauzy scarves of blue and white, which, as they waved about in the maze of the dance, recalled the fleecy cloudlets of an April sky. The infinite grace of the little ones, as they wove their draperies into a diaphanous canopy, aroused the enthusiasm of the spectators, and made a *tout ensemble* of extraordinary beauty. The children were succeeded by shepherds and shepherdesses in rose-coloured garments (No. 3), who ran gaily along with their crooks, followed by bleating sheep and frisky white lambs, which stopped every now and then to gaze with wonder

at the unusual scene, and to cut queer, playful capers; while the faithful sheep-dog looked with benevolent indulgence on little breaches of order and discipline which on ordinary occasions would have provoked a warning bark. The gardeners waving garlands and carrying watering-pots and other appropriate implements, and the haymakers with their rakes and scythes danced a characteristic step, representing with rhythmical, graceful action their ordinary occupations. This scene is given in the full-page illustration opposite.

Suddenly the Alphorn with its mysterious cadence carried us far away to where the eternal

much better it would be if the master and he could only change places. However, he made good use of his opportunity later, and jumped down with alacrity to hold the horse's head when the girl's father, bearing a bowl of cream, walked to the balustrade and presented it to the Abbot of the Guild. The latter drank it off amid the applause of the audience, who detected in the act a hidden compliment.

The cart stands to the right in the full-page photograph, and the donkey bearing the churn and milking-stool, recognising some vague affinities with his own voice in the sound of the bassoon, has turned round to stare at the musi-



From a

NO. 2.—THE BALLET OF THE CHILDREN OF SPRING.

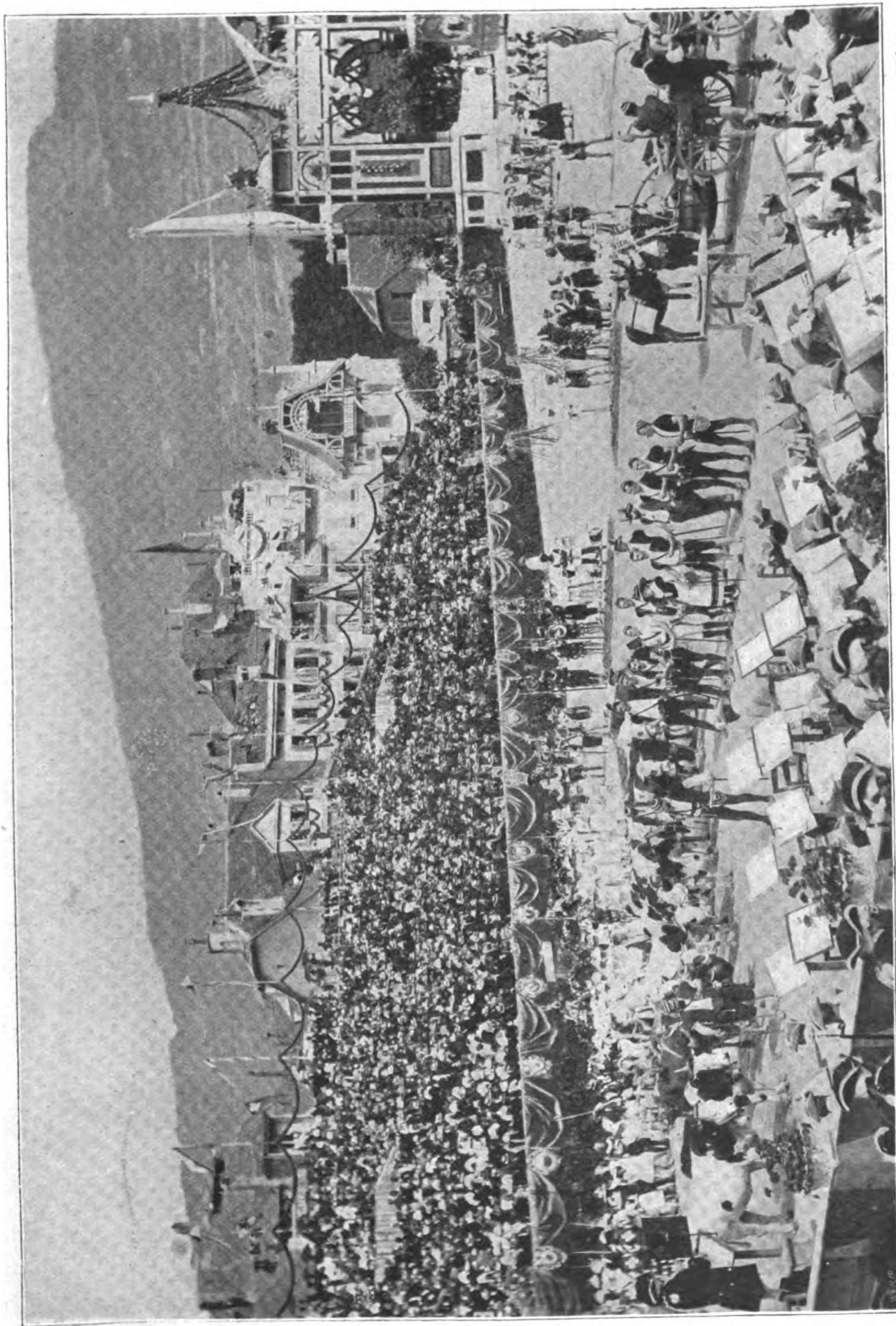
[Photo.]

snows overawe the verdant hills and fertile valleys; the accompaniment of tinkling cow-bells completed the illusion, and the Alpine pageant plunged us into a refreshing atmosphere of pastoral simplicity.

The contemplative cows, with timid little calves pressing close to their sides, advanced slowly, encouraged when they stopped to take in the strange scene by the familiar voices of the herdsmen. After these walked the drovers, in queer top-hats. The chalet owner led his cart containing the necessary utensils for making butter and cheese, and his pretty, rosy-cheeked daughter walked by his side. She was apparently quite unconscious of the admiring glances of her stalwart young lover, who sat on the box-seat of the cart dangling his legs, and thinking how

cian in the foreground, wondering whether the flat dish on the table between them holds anything good to eat. The haymakers are resting in the background, with their rakes and scythes arranged in two curious-looking trophies.

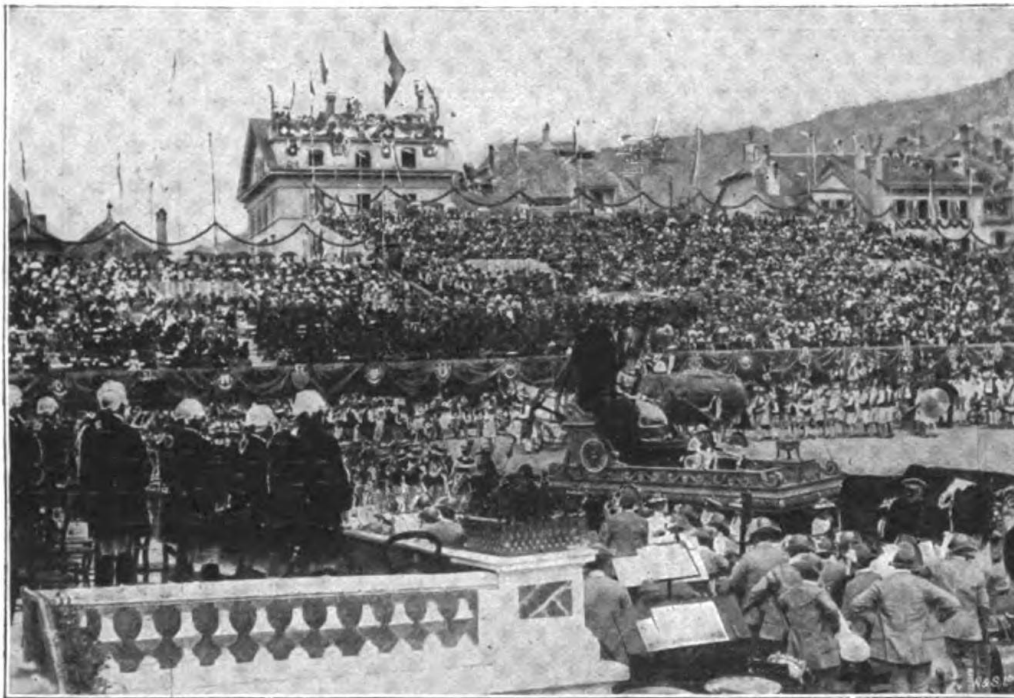
Spring is now on the wane, and summer with its glowing hues, borrowed from the poppies and the corn, made its appearance in the person of Ceres, seated in a car drawn by two oxen (No. 4). Her white draperies, bordered with a Greek key-pattern in red, stood out pure and fresh against the gorgeous red silk canopy. Two little children, entrusted with the mission of keeping the sacred fire of the goddess burning, sat at her feet; and one of them, catching sight of her mother among the reapers behind the cart, could not resist the temptation to call out, under her



[Photo.

NO. 3.—THE ENTRY OF THE HERDSMEN AND SHEPHERDS.

From a]



From a]

NO. 4.—THE EMBLEMATICAL CAR OF CERES.

[Photo.

breath, "*Petite mère, qu' c'est beau!*" In the background stood a detachment of Swiss Guards close to the draped wall of the arena. The hay-

cart had drawn up, and a man was putting the finishing touches to the load with his pitchfork. A good view is gained in the accompanying photograph of the members of the Guild inside the balustrade to the left.

The musicians of the band of Ceres now gathered to the centre, and played a lively dance tune. Immediately there stepped forth from the pageant a merry company of

harvesters, reapers, and gleaners (No. 5): the girls in striped skirts of red and white, with black velvet bodices and loose white sleeves, and



From a]

NO. 5.—THE BALLET OF THE REAPERS.

[Photo.

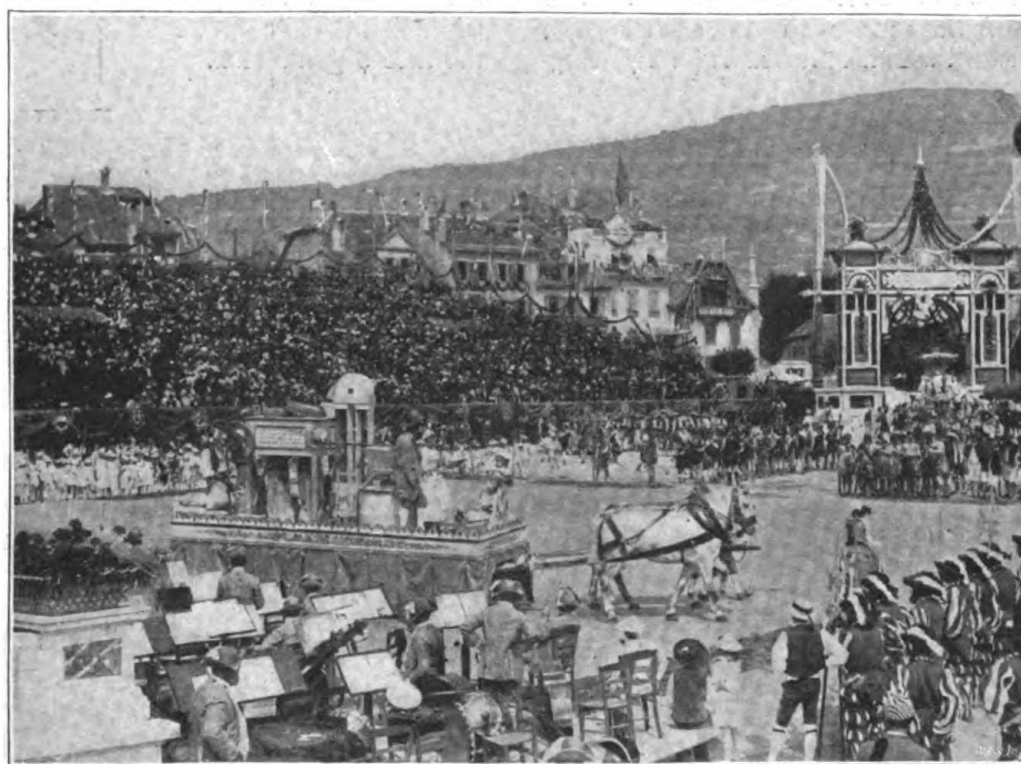
the lads in knee-breeches, gartered with ribbons. Together, then, they executed the sickle dance.

A wheel of gleaners, holding sheaves of corn, formed in the centre, while couples danced, in a large circle round them, a curious figure, in which the girls knelt to await their partners, who made a rush at them, with body bent forward and the sickle held high above the head, in quite a threatening manner. The shadows they cast were grotesque in the extreme—a monkey on a stick and several angular Dutch dolls having been recorded by the camera.

The scene was a charming one; but life is not all dance and song, and poetry was succeeded by the matter-of-fact realities of daily life in the shape of the miller's cart (No. 6), which woke

On the car itself was being enacted the romance of the "Miller and the Maid," a comedy in one act, taken from real life.

But even summer comes to an end, and autumn, with its gorgeous palette, has painted the woods and the flowers with gold and red. This is the season to which all look forward during the whole year. Children have their *Vendanges* holidays, to enable them to accept the invitation of some old servant, who has perhaps married a farmer in the vine-country, and who for a never-to-be-forgotten week dispenses her hospitality and the delights of grape-picking and wine-making with open hands and heart. The little ones, provided with small wooden tubs or baskets, wander about all day



From a]

NO. 6.—THE PAGEANT OF THE MILLER.

[Photo.

the thousands of spectators with a start out of the reverie of pleasant reminiscences into which the past scenes had plunged them. A young couple, for instance, viewing the scene from the pointed gable of a house to the left through rose-coloured spectacles, took them off and fell to discussing ways and means, as the cart came into view with its grinding mill, sifters, and their concomitants. Embroidered sacks formed a suggestive decoration for the car, which bore on one side a prominent if eminently prosaic device put into doggerel rhyme by the village laureate:—

Voici le moulin sans-souci,
Et nous vous offrons cent soussi
Vous découvrez des gens aussi
Contents que ces meuniers-ci.

Vol. ii.—58.

long at their own sweet will among the lanes of the vineyard, plucking the bunches of luscious ripe fruit, either to pronounce on its flavour for themselves or to fill their baskets in a business-like way. All restrictions are removed, and there are no task-masters to keep them up to the mark. When their load becomes too heavy, the children wander to the end of the lane and empty their baskets into the strong, wooden *hotte*, which, when full, the men carry on their backs and discharge into the barrel drawn by a lazy pony, who feasts uninterrupted until the barrel is ready to be taken to the wine-press.

All these objects can be seen in the preceding photograph, for the idea of the pageant is to reproduce all the familiar objects and phases of

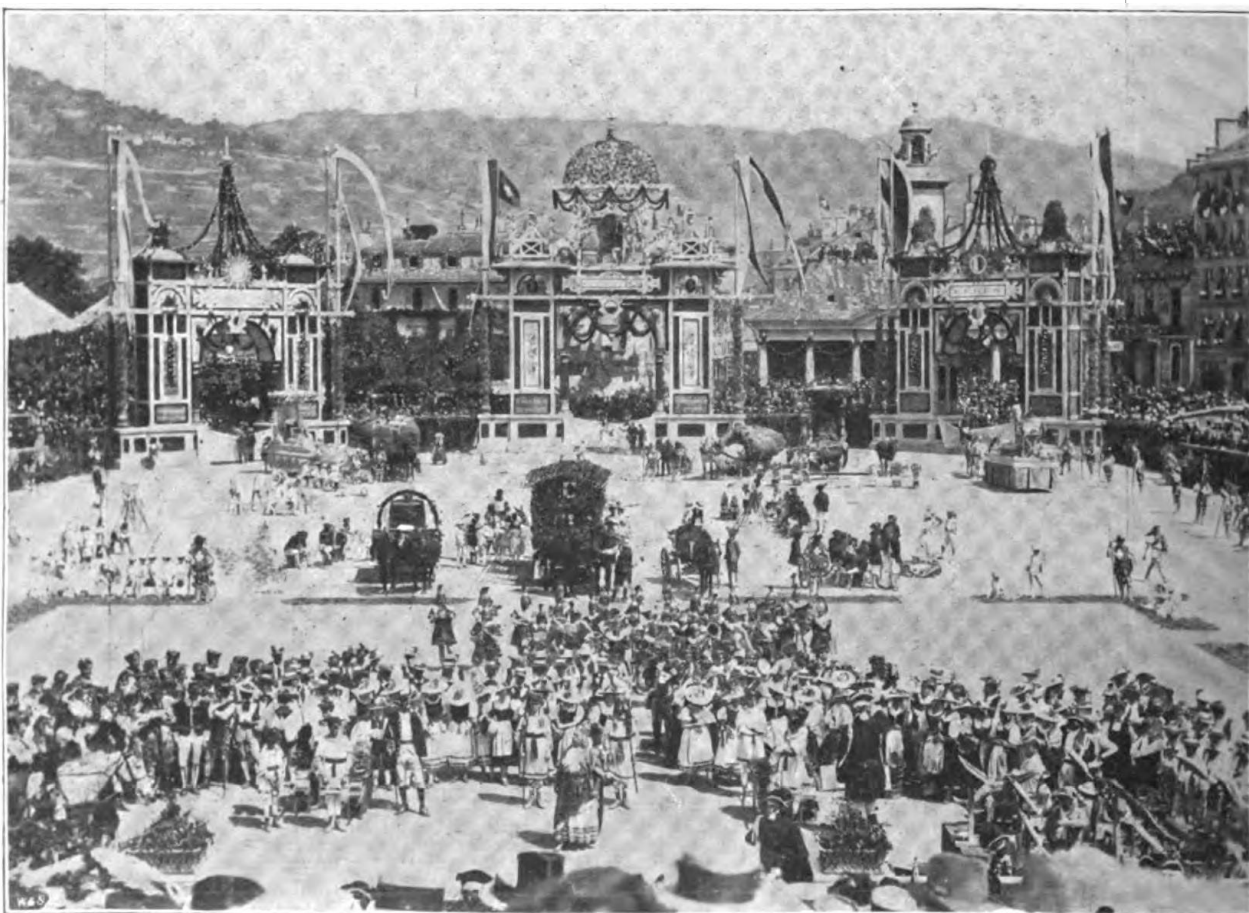
local life and work. One of the greatest delights of the day is to watch the wine-press at work—in some places years ago the men used to tread the grapes with their feet—and to see the muddy-looking but sweet new wine trickling slowly into the tub, and to dip a little mug in to taste it.

When grapes begin to fall there are the walnuts to eat, with delicious new-bread which seems to bring out their full flavour as nothing else can.

The efficiency and durability of walnut stain are also attested by these small fingers, whose owners revel in the experiment, and eagerly compete as to whose shall be blackest; it is all part of the fun, and the mothers know what to expect. But we must return to the arena. The high-priest of Bacchus, with the sacred goat, marched forward with his musicians (No. 7), sing-

better of him, was supported on his ass by Satyrs. The bearers of attributes took up their stand to the left, with their sweet burden of grapes at the side of the cooper's cart, on which a huge barrel was being constructed. In the background, vine-dressers and pickers and the children of Spring stood about in groups taking their ease.

Then the disciples of Bacchus came forward and performed a fantastic dance, in which the laughing Bacchantes darted in and out, pursued by unruly and vigorous fauns to the cry of "*Evohe!*" and the clash of cymbals and tambourines. On the right in photograph No. 8 is seen one of the Bacchantes on the point of being caught; she looked coyly over her shoulder at her pursuer, whose grasp she eluded, just as a triumphant smile broke out over his face, and the race began afresh.



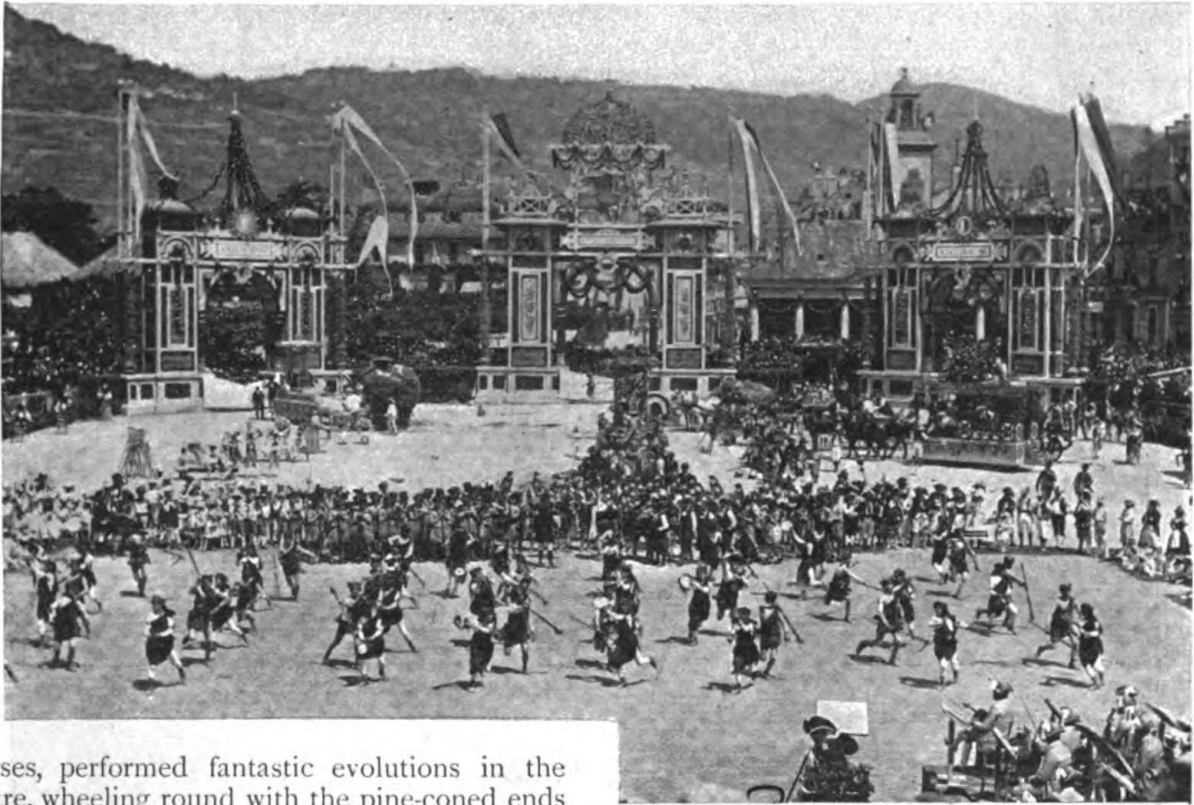
From a]

NO. 7.—CHORUS OF THE HIGH-PRIEST OF BACCHUS.

[Photo.

ing an invocation and followed by fauns in tiger skins and Bacchantes in short red draperies. The Satyrs, with long beards and heavy clubs, preceded the splendid car on which the youthful Bacchus, crowned with vine leaves, sat astride a big barrel of wine. Swarthy Nubians led the four beautiful horses with red nodding plumes; while old Silenus, whose joviality had got the

The next Bacchanalian dance in which these untiring revellers indulged was even more striking than the first, although possibly less wild in character (No. 9). The Bacchantes, by no means subdued by the inevitable capture, danced in rapid steps on the outside of the circle, with hair and garments floating behind them in the breeze; while the fauns, with their wands or

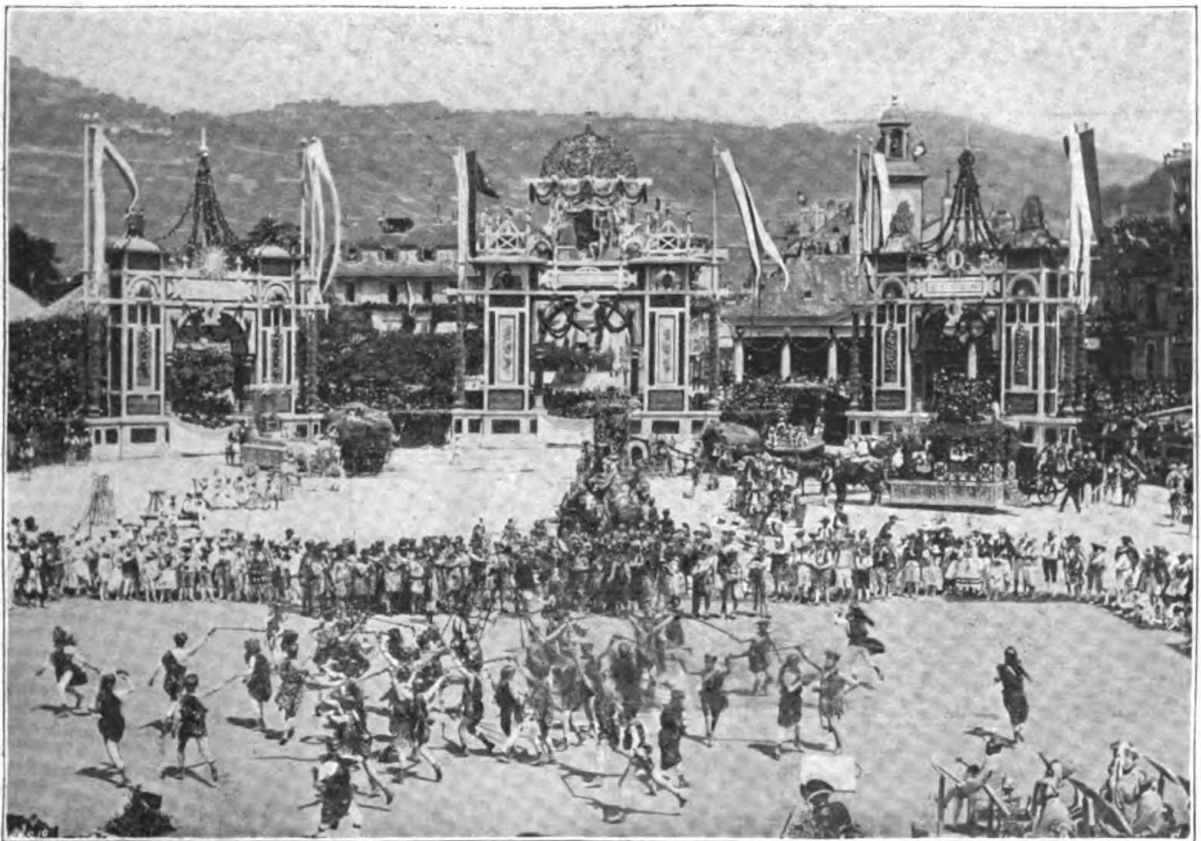


NO. 8.—FIRST BALLET OF THE FAUNS AND BACCHANTES.

From a Photo.

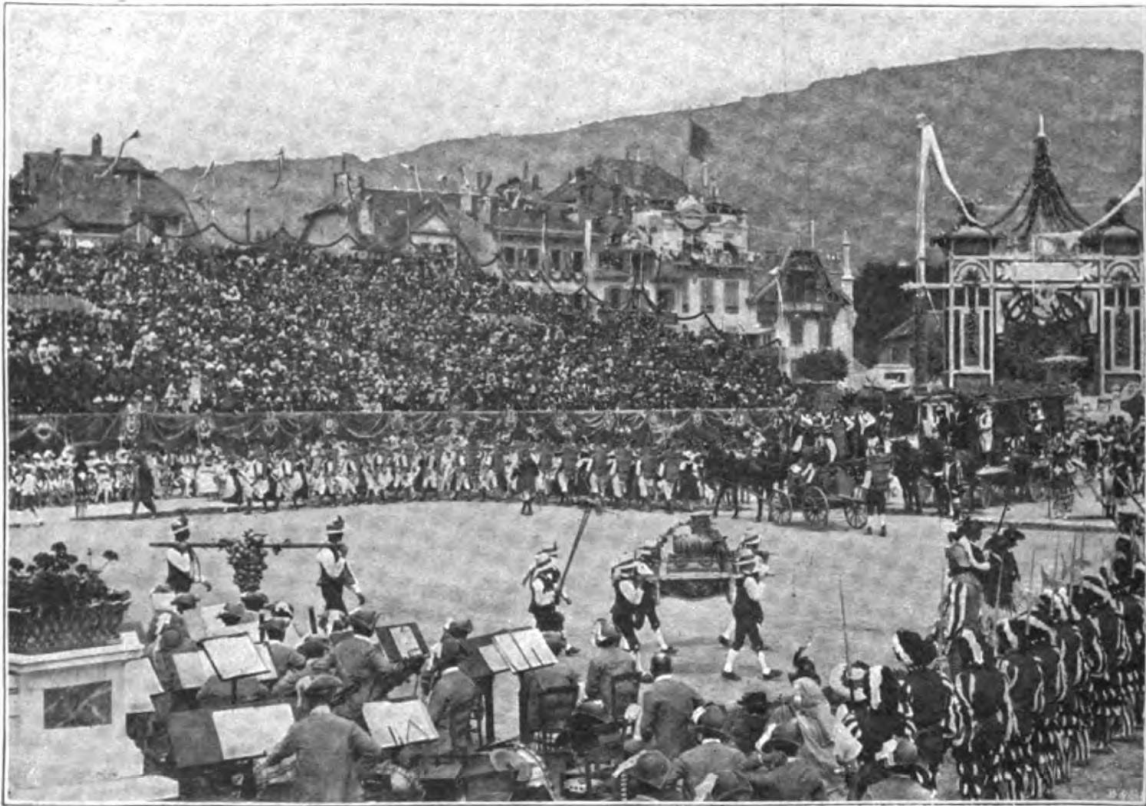
thyrses, performed fantastic evolutions in the centre, wheeling round with the pine-coned ends of the thyrses meeting high above their heads, or held horizontally, forming an arch under which the Bacchantes darted in and out, clashing their cymbals madly. The peaceful scene in

the background afforded a strong contrast, and the hay-cart proved a good point of vantage,

*From a*

NO. 9.—SECOND BALLET OR THYRSIS DANCE.

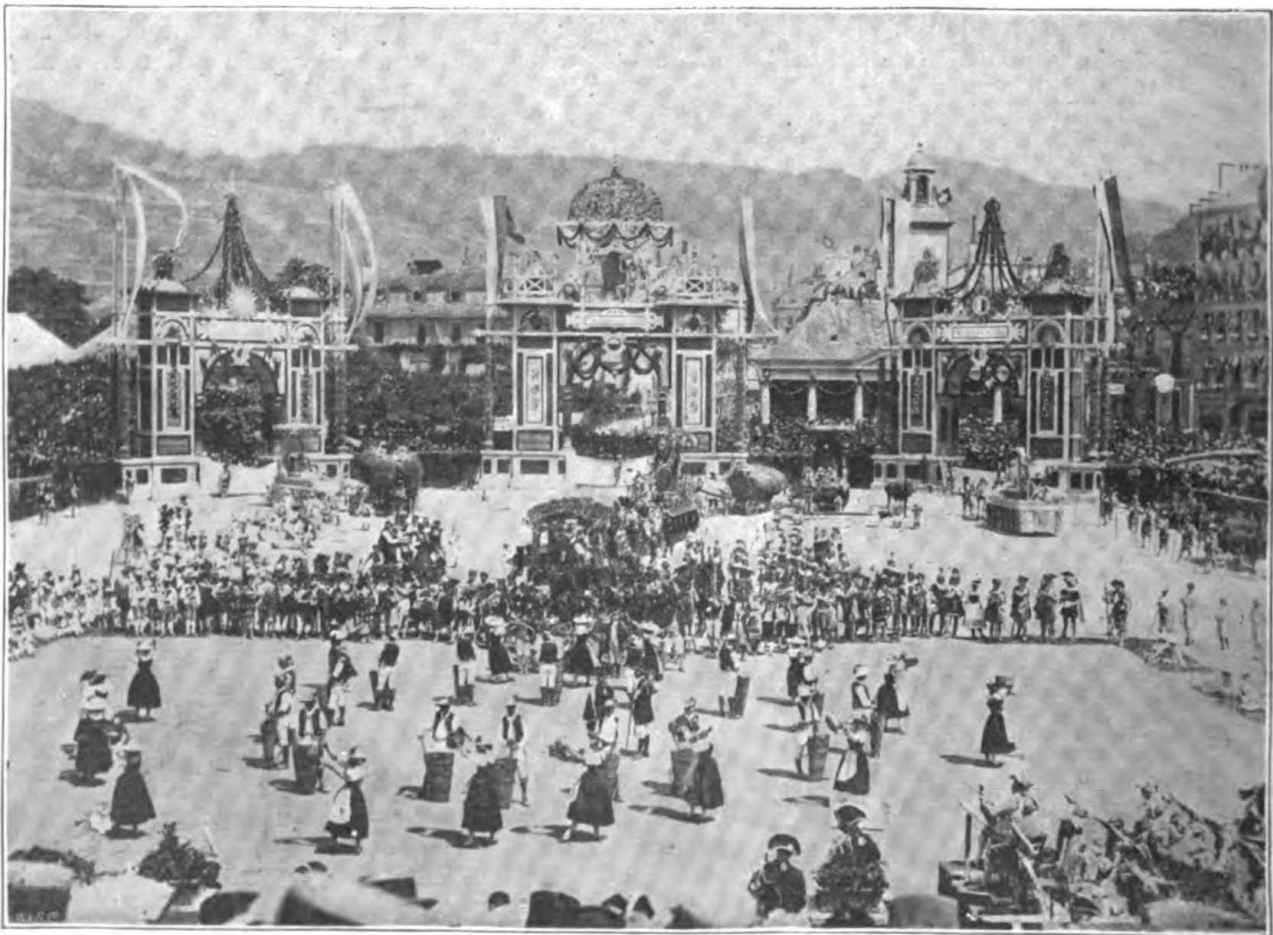
[Photo.]



From a]

NO. 10.—THE MIRACULOUS BUNCH OF GRAPES.

[Photo.



From a]

NO. 11.—BALLET OF THE GRAPE-PICKERS.

[Photo.

from which a little party under an umbrella looked on, chatted, or dozed to their hearts' content according to what was going on.

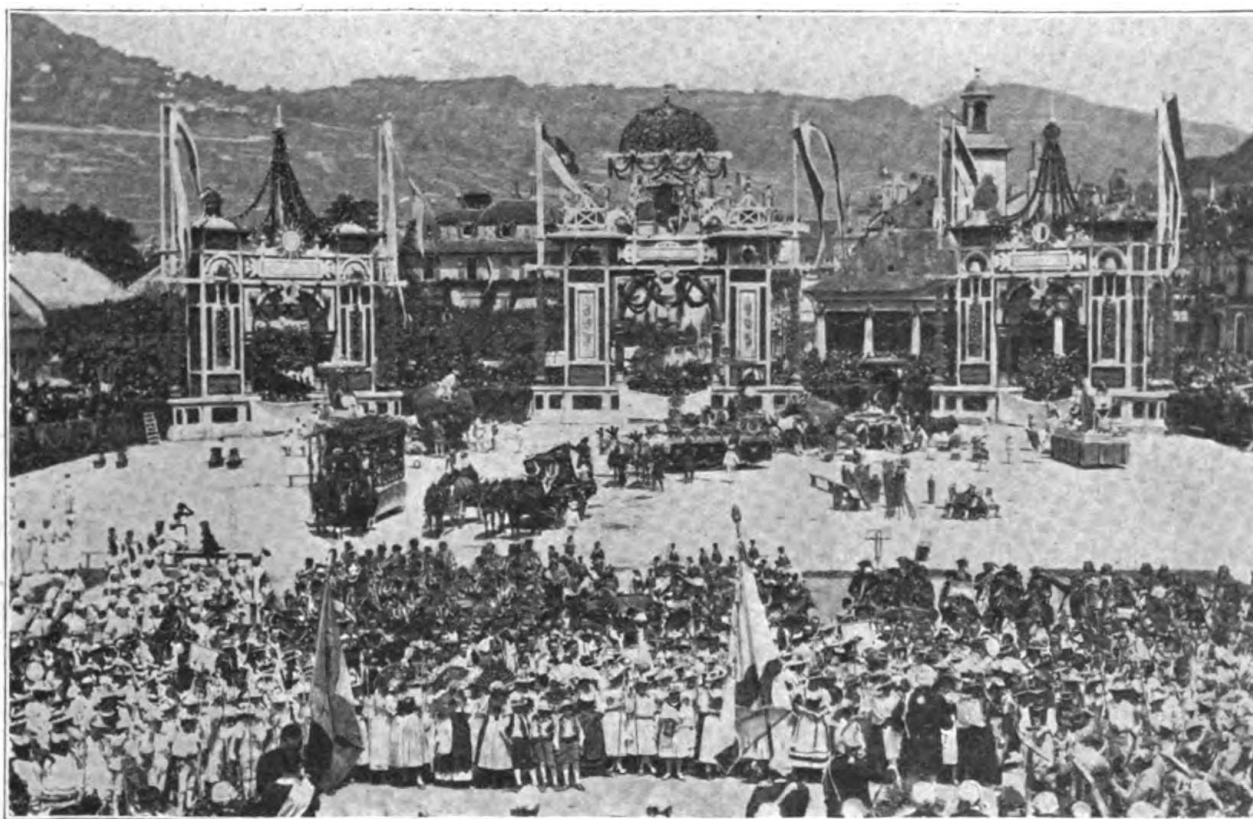
The energy of the dancers having at length abated, they retired into the background to rest, while the bearers of the miraculous bunch of grapes, which hung from a pole, resting on their shoulders, marched past, preceded by bearers of a miniature barrel and wine-press trophy borne by four vine-dressers in green and white (No. 10). In the background marched the vine-dressers themselves, the men with the *hottes* on their backs and the women with little tubs.

The most beautiful of all the cars was that of the grape-pickers, covered with a trellised vine forming a little arbour like those one sees in the gardens of all Swiss country inns, and in which the host invites you to eat your dinner of chicken, salad, and omelet.

The work of grape-picking formed the subject of the last ballet, and is shown in the accom-

panying picture (No. 11). Behind the wide crescent formed by the Autumn group rose the car of Bacchus in the centre. Farther back still stood the two hay-carts and the load of corn, as well as the cars of Ceres and Pales, now deserted by their respective deities, who, tired of the isolation of grandeur, stepped down from their pedestals and mingled with the common crowd. This dance, the most typical of all, was also the most admired, and thunders of applause echoed and re-echoed through the crowded market-place.

At last the dancers resumed their places in the ranks to form up for the grand final scene, which is so well shown in the photograph (No. 12), that our readers will without trouble recognise all the different groups they have learnt to know. But mere description cannot convey an adequate idea of the grace and *verve*, glow and beauty, that marked the gorgeous Wine Festival of Vevey.



From a]

NO. 12.—THE GRAND FINALE.

[Photo.